

Bible Study: The Book of Ruth

Week 1: Ruth 1



The World behind the text - Background:

1. 'Famine in Bethlehem'...?
2. Hebrew is actually literally 'when the judges judged' – significant?
3. Probably written post-Exile – so around 500 BC but refers to a period much earlier – the 'time of the judges' – possibly around 1200-1000BC. So it's a 'historical novel' – but why?

The 'World in Front of the text' – our experience now:

1. How did you meet your spouse/partner?
2. When you were growing up, and now, how do people meet a partner?
3. What do you think are the ingredients of a good story?

The text:

1. What words or phrases immediately strike you?
2. What do you make of Ruth's words to Naomi in 1.16-17?
3. Why do you think this story is based around 3 widows?
4. Where is God in all this?
5. Does this speak to us today?

1In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to live in the country of Moab, he and his wife and two sons. ²The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion; they were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. ³But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. ⁴These took Moabite wives; the name of one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. When they had lived there for about ten years, ⁵both Mahlon and Chilion also died, so that the woman was left without her two sons or her husband.

6 Then she started to return with her daughters-in-law from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the LORD had had consideration for his people and given them food. ⁷So she set out from the place where she had been living, she and her two daughters-in-law, and they went on their way to go back to the land of Judah. ⁸But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, 'Go back each of you to your mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. ⁹The LORD grant that you may find security, each of you in the

house of your husband.’ Then she kissed them, and they wept aloud. ¹⁰They said to her, ‘No, we will return with you to your people.’ ¹¹But Naomi said, ‘Turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? ¹²Turn back, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I should have a husband tonight and bear sons, ¹³would you then wait until they were grown? Would you then refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the LORD has turned against me.’ ¹⁴Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

15 So she said, ‘See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.’ ¹⁶But Ruth said,

‘Do not press me to leave you
or to turn back from following you!

Where you go, I will go;
where you lodge, I will lodge;
your people shall be my people,
and your God my God.

¹⁷ Where you die, I will die—
there will I be buried.

May the LORD do thus and so to me,
and more as well,

if even death parts me from you!’

¹⁸When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

19 So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them; and the women said, ‘Is this Naomi?’ ²⁰She said to them,

‘Call me no longer Naomi,
call me Mara,
for the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me.

²¹ I went away full,
but the LORD has brought me back empty;
why call me Naomi
when the LORD has dealt harshly with me,
and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?’

22 So Naomi returned together with Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, who came back with her from the country of Moab. They came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

